

Sophia Cassam

From: Juniper Lane Guest House <info@juniperlaneguesthouse.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 17, 2022 4:57 PM
To: Vacation Rental Comments
Subject: Vacation rentals May 17th

You don't often get email from info@juniperlaneguesthouse.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear County Council,

I have followed along and listened, commented, and written in over the last few years of this process and there are so many good points on both sides of this problem. There are nuances and situations and ways of operating that still haven't been discussed. I can't help but feel that council still isn't educated enough to make a permanent decision. I believe whatever decision is made, there should be a caveat to revisit restrictions and rules made.

This is extremely difficult for me to stick my neck out and risk being black balled by the business community I have been a part of since 2004. Even more difficult is the fact that people I have deep love and respect for disagree with me strongly on this subject. I have heard the narrative change from equal protections for all of the islands, to only protecting Orcas, and letting it rip on San Juan Island. I hope that this does not end up being the way capping or not capping, goes.

To err on the side of caution now seems reasonable as what we've seen happen in the last 10 years with the Airbnb phenomenon should not be taken lightly. It is a Goliath and you could keep yourself reading articles all day long about small town with a tourism draw being destroyed by the proliferation of vacation rentals with the advent of online home sharing platforms.. Simply look at how many permits have been allocated since 2010!!! How can we protect long time property owners and community members that do chose to short term rentals in order to keep their property in their families? How do we incentivise home owners to rent long term so we can have a year round work force? Even 10 homes that were long term rentals converted into VR's has a tangible blow. If someone builds a home from the ground up to turn into a vacation rental, I don't see a problem. Speculative buying of existing homes from afar to flip into vacation rentals should not be prioritized.

You don't have an easy task, and you'll never please everyone, but I really hope that you can dig deep and think of our future here as a community in these islands. We need all the people to make the happy village work. We also need to think hard about how much is too much. Over-tourism and never-ending growth equals the destruction of what those of us that see this place as more than an investment, hold so dear. It's all I know as home and all of my friends and family are here. Our goal should be to keep the islands livable for the next generations.

This decision is really the elephant in the room when discussing a "Tourism management plan" for San Juan County along with all lodging options. However, traditional lodgings are limited by zoning and land use rules, vacation rentals are allowed almost everywhere except for in The Town of Friday Harbor. Considering the state of our ferries, can we just continue to accommodate, for example 700+ more people per night in the peak season? If the cap was 650 and we had 413 active and compliant in 2021, that would be an additional 237 operating vacation rentals county wide...on the prudent side, I averaged 3 guests per rental and that comes to 711 people in 237 vehicles, if they all took a car.

There has been no slowing down in the request for permits. How can it be sustainable? How do we equally distribute available permits? It is not lost on me, that I am in the business of lodging with a BnB permit and a vacation rental

permit on my two adjacent parcels, and it sounds like I'm afraid of competition to some that don't know me, I'm sure. I do sometimes feel sad that something I have worked so hard at for almost 20 years now makes me feel like I'm part of the problem (can you imagine the amount of beds I've made and toilets I've cleaned) and with due humility, I have made many guests to the island feel blessed that a relatively affordable and beautiful place like mine existed. There are many hosts that have been at this for a long time, with excellent reviews and the kind of thoughtful care in hospitality that should be honored. It's hard work pleasing people at that level all of the time.

Why does my BnB permit require me to test drinking water annually and comply to a plethora of rules and have annual unannounced visits from the State health department in Olympia, but my VR permit does not? Why does a vacation rental not have a similar process like BnB's where the commercial rental property has to go through a live hearing examiner process with community and neighbors input? How can we stop the big corporate take-over of homes and making them a commodity? Please think about the future and livability for people who want to make this their home and please consider the things we lose in our community, look to places that have already been inundated with short term rentals, its not a mystery, we've seen it happen and 100% of the time the damage is irreversible. Existing permits should not be on the chopping block, please assure all current owners of this fact.

Juniper Maas Mercer
Innkeeper / Owner
info@juniperlaneguesthouse.com
www.juniperlaneguesthouse.com

#360-378-7761

text
#360-298-1231